

**TADEUSZ PALMOWSKI**

University of Gdańsk

## **NEW CONDITIONS FOR SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT IN POLISH-RUSSIAN BORDER REGIONS**

**Abstract:** After Poland and the Baltic States accessed the European Community, the Baltic became an internal EU water basin with stability and economic development extending to this zone, progressing free flow of people, goods and capital. The Kaliningrad Oblast may benefit from the above only to a limited degree because the political and economic life standards are not adapted to the technological standards of the new environment. Nevertheless, supporters of economic and social integration of the Kaliningrad Oblast with its closest environment are gaining ground, especially in the Oblast itself. They realise that the Oblast cannot function deprived of close co-operation with Baltic Europe neighbours, and particularly Poland and Lithuania. They support cross-border co-operation and foreign investments in the region. Thanks to them Kaliningrad co-operation develops under many Baltic initiatives and programmes.

The signing of the agreement on free shipping on the entire Vistula Lagoon on October 1, 2009 may prove to be a major drive for the activation of the sea port in Elbląg and tourist animation of other small ports around the water basin. The revival of the Elbląg - Kaliningrad line is connected with the import of coal amounting to approximately 10 thousand tons per month. Import of aggregate is also planned.

The development of a new model for EU and Russia co-operation may stimulate the economy and new forms of spatial development of Polish and Kaliningrad border regions.

### **Introduction**

At the Teheran conference, by the decision of superpowers, approved in Potsdam, Eastern Prussia was divided in 1945 into two parts: the Polish part embracing the southern region of Eastern Prussia and the northern Russian part, which after World War II is termed Kaliningrad Oblast. The Oblast is a Baltic exclave of Russia bordering with Poland and Lithuania. To the end of the eighties the Kaliningrad Oblast, the most westward extending and strongly military part of USSR, separated by the territories of republics being part of one federal state, remained a taboo subject as if „did not exist” on the political map. The situation of the region underwent violent changes at the verge of the eighties and nineties. The regaining of independence by Lithuania resulted in the

separation of the Oblast from Russia first by one and then several countries (Latvia and Belarus). The final separation of the Oblast took place on 8 December 1991 with the disintegration of USSR. Enlargement of the Schengen Area strongly influenced mutual relations in crossborder co-operation of neighbouring communities.

The introduction of tighter visa and border policies towards Poland's eastern neighbours lying outside the area was anticipated before the enlargement of the Schengen Area. This referred to the introduction of visa duty, visa prices and restrictions. It was assumed that the major direct effect of the enlargement may involve decreasing border traffic of individuals, especially in the initial period, as well as social and economic difficulties faced by the crossborder regions. The introduced measures were also expected to hinder minor crossborder trade.

The enlargement of the Schengen Area was also expected to influence the effectiveness of eastern policies of new EU member States, including Poland, and to weaken the positive offer addressed to societies and governments of east European governments abating the attractiveness of these countries as promoters of the European concept (Jaroszewicz 2007).

## 1. Consequences of introducing visa fees

To limit the severity and losses projected in result of implementing new rules, national competencies of EU border States retained certain options for reliefs and simplifications.

Poland, together with countries accessing the European Union in 2004, started applying the entire *acquis communautaire* by the end of 2007. By 1 September 2007 these States gained access to the Schengen Information System (SIS). Every visa applicant, before receiving a visa is meticulously checked if he/she is not wanted or if other member States have refused them entry.

The inhabitants of Kaliningrad Oblast, who before 1 June 2007 were entitled to a visa free of charge, today according to an agreement concluded on 25 June 2006 in Soczi between the European Union and the Russian Federation, must pay, starting 1 June 2007, 35 euros per visa. The same fee is binding for Poles applying for Russian visas.

In consequence of introducing fees, the number of visas issued in June 2007 by the Polish Consulate in Kaliningrad fell threefold compared to the previous month. The falling interest of Kaliningrad inhabitants to travel to Poland has a clear impact on local travel bureaus, which noted dropping interest in several day long trips to Gdańsk by up to 80%<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Changes that took place in border traffic between Poland and the Kaliningrad Oblast are presented in more detail by R. Anisiewicz in the article entitled *Changes in crossborder traffic and structure with the Kaliningrad Oblast in the post accession period*.

The decreasing number of passengers travelling by the only railway line between Gdynia and Kaliningrad resulted in limiting the number of carriages from two to one in the middle of 2008, and at the beginning of February in suspending the connection altogether. The line is to be opened for the summer season. At the end of 2008, the bus line Kaliningrad-Gdansk sometimes carried no more than a single passenger.

Before accession to the Schengen area, 2.5 to 5 thousand persons crossed the border at Gronowo-Mamonovo, whereas in 2008 from 1.5 to 2 thousand travellers.

In order to stimulate relations, including economic relations with the Kaliningrad Oblast, the Polish Airlines LOT opened a line Warsaw Kaliningrad on 15 May 2002. LOT airplanes flew even six times a week starting September 2002. The Chopin airport was a transit point for Kaliningrad inhabitants to many locations in Europe and worldwide. With 1 September 2008 the line was suspended due to the falling number of passengers and loss of profitability.

In October 2007, talks were initiated with the Commissioner for EU external relations and the Council of the Baltic Sea States with the Russian party during which EU confirmed readiness to introduce a special procedure for Polish and Lithuanian local border traffic of residents within a 30 kilometre zone. However, there remains in the Oblast a narrow path including Kaliningrad itself not covered by the agreement. In 2009 it was decided that Poland and Lithuania together with Russia would apply to the European Commission to include the entire Kaliningrad Oblast to the local border traffic zone. Perhaps on the grounds of mutual co-operation the extended area will also refer to the Polish side. Elbląg, which is located 50 km from the border is making efforts to qualify as a local border traffic zone.

The introduction of visas between Poland and Russia hindered and restricted local border trade which for years was the only measure mitigating social and economic problems of the crossborder regions. Border markets have lost their vigour and are dying. However, this practice is also undergoing change. The place of Kaliningrad residents is being taken over by Poles for whom it is easier to cross the border. On the Polish side, there are no longer queues of cars waiting to cross the border. On the Russian side, though the number of persons and vehicles crossing the border has decreased, queues have not disappeared due to the procedures and officiating Russian authorities. Waiting time can be significantly limited. In 2009 the additional "fee" amounted to 30 American dollars.

The Schengen rules fortunately had no impact on economic co-operation with the Kaliningrad Oblast. Trade turnover in 2007, as compared to 2006, rose by 18%. This was mainly due to Russian export to Poland, 50% of which was the export of gas and next oil products, wood, timber and amber. The Polish products dominating in import to Kaliningrad Oblast included foodstuffs, household detergents, construction and finishing materials, machines, furniture and other consumable goods and plastic products. The overall trade turnover between Poland and the Kaliningrad Oblast in 2007, according to the General Consulate of the Republic of Poland, reads 548 mil-

lion \$ and shows a rising trend. Export to Poland rose by 38% and amounted to 74.3 million \$. Import from Poland to the Oblast increased more gradually and in the same year rose merely by 15.9%. It is valued at 473.7 million \$. It is estimated that 20% of Polish export to the Oblast comes from the Polish Russian border regions. There are approximately 80 Polish small and medium sized enterprises operating in the Kaliningrad Oblast. Some of them are seated in Warmińsko-Mazurskie voivodship.

Polish business investments are minimal; there are practically no direct investments. This state is connected with the existing borders "tightening" the small Kaliningrad Oblast market and big logistic outlays necessary to enter the huge Russian market. Therefore, many big Polish companies enter the market immediately. Additionally, Polish investors are limited by infrastructural problems in the Oblast, power and labour shortages.

## 2. Kaliningrad Oblast development strategy

The document entitled *Territorial comprehensive urban development plan for the Kaliningrad Oblast and its parts* presents the spatial development strategy of the Kaliningrad Oblast to the year 2030. It accounts for environmental balance, functioning of the Kaliningrad Oblast in a competitive environment and its dynamic development in co-operation with the Russian Federations and Baltic Europe countries. The key objectives indicated in the document, at the federal and regional level, involve identifying social and economic development trends of the Oblast. These require:

- securing a single political, economic and defensive space for the Oblast in Russia;
- creating conditions for social and economic development of the region comparable to that in countries neighbouring with the Kaliningrad Oblast.

To achieve this aim the main measure for the federal economic policy is to improve the investment climate in the Oblast and upgrade the economy to the level and quality ensuring a sustainable life standard for the Oblast residents comparable to that of residents in neighbouring States. Priorities for social and economic development of the Oblast include:

- development of a transport system;
- finding a solution to the problem of power supply independence;
- transformation of the economic structure in the region aimed at developing export and growth of anti import production stimulated by innovative activities and priorities in development of the high technology sector;
- reconstruction of the "amber" industry and fish processing complex;
- improvement of the telecommunication infrastructure;
- support for agricultural and foodstuffs entrepreneurship to assure consumers an adequate level of supplies and independence from supplies delivered from outside the Oblast;

- development of the tourist and recreation sector;
- further development of scientific research integration processes.

Eight key objectives for the development of the Kaliningrad Oblast were also specified:

- integration of the Oblast with Baltic Europe countries;
- development of a balanced system for regional settlement;
- improving the quality of life in peripheral, agricultural parts of the Oblast and diversification of economy in small towns;
- developing an optimal network of landscape as well as natural environment and culture related sites. Developing big integrated nature zones. These areas will contribute to environmental stability of the region;
- development of regional tourism infrastructure and its integration with Baltic Europe tourism infrastructure;
- development of an efficient system for protection of water resources and coastal water of the Vistula Lagoon and Curonian Lagoon against anthropogenic hazards;
- technical upgrading of transport means, including collective/public transport systems. Reducing the negative impact of transport on the natural environment;
- development of power supply systems assuring energy and environmental security of the Oblast.

Aspects directly related to Poland, indicated in the first objective, involve an inadequate number of border crossings, poor competitiveness of Oblast ports as compared to Polish ports. Projected measures involve dredging of the sea fairway leading to Kaliningrad, development of existing ports, particularly ro-ro systems, development of Baltic ferry connections and modernisation of the airport.

Development of crossborder co-operation (in industry, agriculture and food-stuffs sector, tourism and recreation sector, environmental protection and development of border infrastructure) is also planned. In particular these refer to the border crossing towns of Mamonovo - Braniewo, Bagrationowsk - Bartoszyce and Oziorsk - Gołdap. Other forms of co-operation include:

- international co-operation in the sphere of ecology, tourism and recreation;
- co-operation in protection of crossborder water systems;
- development of Mazurskie - Curonian water routes (the Great Mazurian Lakes - Mazurski Canal - Łyna - Pregola - Deyma - Polessk Canal - Curonian Lagoon - Baltic);
- development of international communication between Gdańsk and Kaliningrad;
- separation of the transport corridor Kaliningrad - Chernyakhovsk - Augustów (Białystok) - Baranovichi- Grodno.

The document also projects:

- development of sea ports in Baltiysk, Svetly and Kaliningrad (the construction of a new deep-sea port is foreseen) and airport Chabrowo;

- development of multimodal transport including the construction of multimodal terminals (car - rail, rail - rail between European 1435 mm rail system and 1520 WNP rail system);
- construction of gas trunk line Grodno-Czerniachowsk (through the Polish territory) with the options of natural gas supplies to Polish north east Voivodships.

Three of four variants for electric power supplies for the Kaliningrad Oblast are connected with Poland. The document projects the development of water sports, *i.a.* Vistula Lagoon, Mazurski Canal and the Łyna river. Under the programme of developing cycling tourism, as part of the international "Baltic Ring" in the Russian part of the Vistula Spit, a cycling centre is planned and construction of bicycle routes. These plans also concern the Wisztyniecki nature reserve.

Kaliningrad, Svetlogorsk and Baltiysk are projected for the development of festival tourism and congress activity. The spa functions are to be further developed in Svetlogorsk, Zelenoje, Otradnoye and Pionersky. New spa locations to be developed include Yantarny, Donskoye and Primorie. historical and culture focused tourist centres as well as "nostalgic" tourism to Kaliningrad, Svetlogorsk, Bagrationovsk, Chernyakhovsk, Gusev and Sovetsk.

Kaliningrad tourist recreation systems are to be included in the international crossborder co-operation network. Water tourism could refer to such water routes as Augustów Canal (Grodno-Augustów), water route Gdansk - Elbląg - Kaliningrad - Kłajpeda. The following, *i.a.*, are to be included in the international tourist routes leading from the Kaliningrad Oblast; Augustów Primeval Forest, Biebrza and Wigry National Parks, Great Mazurian Lake District with Mikołajki, water route Łyna - Pregola linking Mazury with Kaliningrad and Mazurski Canal. The Hanseatic League route is to link Gdańsk-Kaliningrad and Riga.

The sixth objective projects the development of an efficient system for protection of water resources and coastal zones (areas) of the Vistula Lagoon and Curonian Lagoon against anthropogenic hazards. The document pointed to the hypereutrophication of the Vistula Lagoon. Degradation of the Vistula Lagoon excludes its economic role and lowers the recreational function of its coasts. The major pollution sources of the water basin are the towns of Kaliningrad, Svetly, Mamonovo and Ladushkin. Biogenic compounds (mainly phosphorus and nitrogen) are also discharged to the Lagoon from melioration systems. Industrial and municipal waste is landfilled in 23 locations covering an area of over 100 ha. These landfills contain several tons of toxic compounds. Approximately 25% of the dunghills connected with animal production are located in water protection areas of the Pregola, Prochladnoje, Łyna and other rivers in the Oblast. The document points to international responsibility for the quality of Lagoon waters. This means it is necessary to build a sewage treatment plant in, *inter alia*, Kaliningrad and Mamonovo.

### 3. Shipping problems on the Vistula Lagoon

Around the Vistula Lagoon and the mouth of the Elbląg River there are in total twelve small Polish ports and havens. The biggest Polish sea and river port in this water basin is Elbląg.

The end of Elbląg's links with the sea, and the same the deterioration of the Elbląg port to a peripheral port resulted from the situation created by the USSR in 1945 when the state border of Poland and USSR ran across the Vistula Lagoon, from Elbląg and other Lagoon ports through the Strait of Baltiysk to the Baltic Sea (contrary to the agreement between Poland and USSR of 16 August 1945). The water border in normal international relations is not an obstacle to international sea shipping. The freedom of passage for sea going vessels means sailing from the area of one country in order to reach another country. Thus, Elbląg is today the only Polish and EU sea port without access to the Baltic Sea.

In recent years favourable conditions have appeared for the development of a modern sea port operated as a municipal port, managed by the town.

Further development of the sea port is conditioned by the openness of shipping routes, improved technical condition of facilities, wharfs as well as port and tourism infrastructure, and port promotion. It is assumed that the port in Elbląg will ultimately be open to ships of 3 m draught and up to 100 m long, *i.e.* of 2.5 thousand GT (Luks 2006).

The direct outskirts of Elbląg will be the Baltic ports, mainly Kaliningrad Oblast (Baltiysk, Kaliningrad, Svetly), as well as small ports in Scandinavia and Germany, and from time to time Northern Sea ports. Elbląg will also be a feeder port for Gdansk and Gdynia using an inland waterway (Szkarpawa). The major cargo stream projected in international turnover of Elbląg port will embrace goods traded with Kaliningrad. Trade with the Kaliningrad Oblast may embrace a wide range of both exported and imported goods.

To ensure a stable and independent waterway linking the Lagoon with the Baltic Sea, a concept was developed for a canal across the Vistula Spit, which would stimulate the connection of Elbląg with the ports of Gdańsk and Gdynia and connections with small Baltic ports. Opening of the Lagoon may also have an impact on stimulating sailing tourism, which will result in greater traffic in tourist locations around the Lagoon.

The functioning of Elbląg port has depended on political factors since 1945. The present situation results from a one sided decision of USSR, separating surprisingly and without precedence not only the Lagoon water basin but the Vistula Spit itself. Though mutual agreements in force ensure free passage of Polish ships through the Strait of Baltiysk, these remain solely declarations on paper. Before 1989, Polish authorities did not assert Polish rights and did not fully readdress the problem in the following 18 years. Polish diplomacy was not prepared for the hard and fundamental talks with their eastern partner (Bugajski 2006). Shipping of foreign flagged ships,

yachts as well as Polish vessels and sailing between Polish and Russian ports around the Vistula Lagoon were prohibited.

Diplomatic talks on the dispute have continued since 1991. The Polish side, in relations with Russia, aimed at signing relevant provisions to make shipping on the water basin possible not only for trading vessels but all vessel types (*e.g.* yachts and other recreational and sports units) flying the Polish and other flags. The abstemious standing towards Polish proposals Russia were explained by, *i.a.*, environmental reasons and difficulties in the eventual maintenance of the fairway in good condition. Russia also referred to the problem of bathymetry, including the small depth of the basin and the problem of dredging exceeding its financial capacity and, in economic terms, remaining rather unprofitable. Nevertheless, earlier agreements were not fully respected.

Work on regulating the shipping problem was undertaken many times by the Polish Russian Council for Regional Co-operation of the Republic of Poland with the Russian Federation of the Russian Federation and the Joint Commission for Environmental Protection and Comprehensive Spatial Development of the Vistula Lagoon. Signing of an agreement on shipping in the Vistula Lagoon was one of the tasks of the Polish Ministry of Transport and Maritime Economy. Similarly, measures aimed at providing access and freedom of shipping in the water basin to vessels of third countries were undertaken by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Infrastructure. Intergovernmental talks on the issue to the end of 2008 failed.

Though talks had been in progress from the beginning of the nineties, thanks to a more lenient attitude to restrictions for shipping in the Strait of Baltiysk, the Russians opened the Lagoon to ships flying all flags along the entire fairway leading to Kaliningrad, freedom of shipping was restored. A shipping line was instated between Polish and Russian ports in the Lagoon. Such a liberation of shipping rules resulted in stimulation of ports on both sides. The only remaining restriction in force involved a ban for ships flying other than Polish and Russian flag to cross the Russian part of the Lagoon.

Since 2006 the Russians reinstated rigorist observance of the 1945 treaty and shipping between the ports of both sides came to a standstill. The problem of access to the Polish part of the Lagoon became acute with a detrimental effect on all Polish gminas round the Lagoon and of the Kaliningrad Oblast. On September 1 2009, the prime ministers of Poland and Russia signed in Sopot a long awaited agreement, between the government of the Republic of Poland and the government of Russia, regarding shipping on the Vistula Lagoon. The agreement was to come into force on the day of signing, then after ratification, which the Council of Ministers approved on 19 October 2009. Ship traffic to Polish ports on the Vistula Lagoon is also regulated by the Order of the Russian Federation Government dated 15 July 2009 on providing access for ships flying foreign flags sailing to or from ports. The agreement on freedom of shipping on the Vistula Lagoon signed five years ago gives rise to doubts as to its implementation in practice. The key disputable issues involved acceptance by the



Polish party of a mutual clause in the agreement allowing for traffic suspension due to defence, safety related reasons and protection of the natural environment. The actual enforcement of the agreement will have a major impact on stimulating the sea port in Elbląg and the tourist sector of small ports around the Vistula Lagoon. Revival of trading on the Kaliningrad - Elbląg route is connected with import of about 10 thousand tons of coal monthly. Import of aggregate is also projected.

An alternative solution for linking the Elbląg sea port with the Baltic, independently postulated as far back as in 1945 by E. Kwiatkowski and also by St. Leszczycki, is the project of a canal cutting across the Vistula Spit near Skowronki. The construction of the canal would enhance the attractiveness of the entire water basin, including its Russian part. (Kowalczyk, Łuczak 2007). The idea itself gives rise to many controversies and emotional reactions. It seems that an adequate investment should not disrupt natural lithodynamic processes along the Baltic coast of the Spit and ecological balance of the Vistula Lagoon. Lack of risk was also confirmed by study results of the consequences of building the canal across the Spit conducted in 2008 by the Institute of Hydro-Engineering of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAS) in Gdańsk. The investment may significantly contribute to economic stimulation of this water basin.

#### **4. Environmental protection in cross-border regions**

The Vistula Lagoon together with the Vistula Spit and Elbląg Upland Landscape Park and Żuławy Wiślane form a unique natural landscape and environment complex spreading along the Polish border to Kaliningrad Oblast. The Vistula Lagoon is a water bird sanctuary and the Vistula Spit flora and Elbląg Upland Landscape Park feature a multitude of rare species and plant communities. Distinct landscape and natural environment values are also accompanied by valuable cultural aspects. These values are however not fully protected. There are two landscape parks here "Vistula Spit" and "Elbląg Upland Landscape Park". They do not ensure sufficient protection to the Lagoon itself. Full protection can be assured by comprehensive protection of the entire Vistula Spit and Vistula Lagoon, together with the coastline, provided by the Polish and Kaliningrad side.

On the Russian side of the Vistula Spit a zoological reserve was created in 1963 called „Wislinskaja Kosa". Apart from protection of water birds and mammals, unique dunes, woods and beaches, the adjacent seas and Lagoon waters were also subject to protection. The reserve, covering an area of 21 km<sup>2</sup>, ranges across the entire Russian part of the Vistula Spit from the Polish border to the small village of Kosa near the Strait of Baltiysk. This village has a population of nearly 1000. The few developed facilities on the Spit are the remains of a large military airport close to Kosa and a big radiolocation station close to the Polish border. An unsurfaced road covered by concrete plates, in some sections, runs along the Spit.

Unfortunately, in 2004, the preserve „Wislinskaja Kosa" suddenly disappeared from all new maps and studies published in Kaliningrad. In 2006, a Berlin based consulting company performed a study on future tourist oriented development of the Vistula Spit. The Russian side explains the disappearance of the preserve by the expiry of relevant regulations.

The Kaliningrad Oblast, according to Russian sources, is a region of ecological disaster. In the coastal area there are nine major pollution sources (hot points) noted by the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM). Over half of the towns in the Oblast have no effectively operating sewage treatment plants, while those operating do not provide sufficient treatment. The construction of a new sewage treatment plant in Kaliningrad has not been completed. A mechanical treatment plant from the beginning of the previous century is still operated.

Up to date, the biggest problem of the Vistula Lagoon is, according to Kaliningrad sources, its hypereutrophication. The main polluter is the City of Kaliningrad where untreated, aggressive sewage from a half million strong Kaliningrad flows along an open canal directly to the Vistula Lagoon. The collector at the mouth of Primorsk Bay discharges over a ton of sewage every minute. Lagoon waters near the discharging collector include elements of the entire Mendeleev's table. Faeces and municipal sewage flow to the Pregola by hundred of gutters and intersections. Ports, oil terminals also discharge oily waters and industrial waste directly to the Pregola River. Annually approximately 300-350 million m<sup>3</sup> of waste, 75% of which is untreated, flows from Kaliningrad Oblast into the Baltic Sea. Together with sewage about 300 tons of oil products, 3-3.5 tons of surface active substances, 92 thousand tons of organic compounds, 6.7 thousand tons of nitrogen, 1.8 thousand tons of phosphorus, 14 thousand tons of sulphates, 5-10 tons of zinc, and a ton of nickel are discharged to the Lagoon.

To improve the ecological situation of the Vistula Lagoon, joint measures are required by both the Polish and the Russian side. Programmes for social and economic development of Kaliningrad Oblast project the solving of these environmental problems.

All Lagoon lying towns in Poland already have their sewage treatment plants. Towns in Warmińsko-Mazurskie voivodship are at average in 87% equipped with sanitary sewage systems.

The basis of international co-operation in establishing protected crossborder regions in this part of Europe could be the so called Wigry Declaration signed in 1992 in Wigry by governmental representatives, territorial authorities and scientists from Poland, Russia, Lithuania, Latvia, Belarus and Ukraine. The declaration assumes close co-operation of the signatories in protection of the environment and eco development.

Under the ECONET system, which provides grounds for integrated measures to protect the natural environment and implement the principle of sustainable development, the entire Vistula Spit is considered to be a node region of international importance characterised by saturation of unique, in terms of nature, natural plant communities and natural sanctuaries of European rank.

Vistula Spit Landscape Park together with a marine zone extending to 10 meters in depth and inundate waters zone 1 sea mile wide have been included by HELCOM to Baltic Sea Protected Areas (BSPA). These are natural environments (or slightly affected by man), which feature the greatest natural environment value in the Baltic area.

The Vistula Spit and Lagoon lie in the area of the regional crossborder co-operation structure established in 1998 as the Euroregion Baltic. The main objectives of Euroregional co-operation cover, *inter alia*, protection and improvement of the environment, development of tourism in crossborder regions, improving efficiency of border traffic, cultural exchange and care for the common cultural heritage.

All premises and conditions show potential for developing Polish and Russian crossborder co-operation in tourism and environmental protection of the Vistula Spit and Lagoon. The water protection system of the Vistula Lagoon should cover the entire Lagoon drainage basin on both sides of the border.

The Suwalsko-Wisztyniecki area lies on the borderline of Poland, Lithuania and the Kaliningrad Oblast of the Russian Federation. To preserve the exceptional landscape and natural environment of this area, artificially split by state borders, which includes such forests as the primeval Rominicka Forest, a trilateral crossborder national park, should be established.

Crossborder protected areas should be regions of close co-operation of local authorities and environmental protection offices of Poland and Russia to protect the most valuable areas, promote environmentally friendly forms of tourism and development in line with eco-development principles. Two voivodships neighbouring with the Oblast: Pomorskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie are interested in co-operating with the exclave. Closer ties with the exclave, developing relations and crossborder contacts are important for border regions in Poland and the Kaliningrad Oblast. Improvement of the ecological situation and infrastructure would provide an opportunity for the development of tourism services.

Potential ecological hazards from the Russian side, regarding the rapidly developing shipments of oil and oil derivatives, can turn to ecological catastrophes caused by; ship casualties (including tankers) and oil rigs, as well as pollution connected with cargo handling, discharging of ballast waters *etc.* to the Vistula Lagoon and the Gdańsk Bay.

Crossborder environmental hazards that may affect Poland may also be related to the operation of existing military stations, military training grounds and warehouses, creating a number of environmental problems. The key ecological problems are connected with storage and treatment of ammunition and obsolete military equipment. Arsenals, stations and warehouses located in close vicinity of Kaliningrad city pose a considerable hazard. Direct vulnerability of the city and its residents increases with the appalling technical state of the warehouses, which often lack compliance with regulations for ammunition storage.

A hazard that could be an area of future co-operation may also be the melioration systems built in the times of Eastern Prussia now split by a state border. The disastrous

technical condition of the systems resulting from lack of maintenance and connections with the Russian part is the reason of flooding in border regions of Bartoszycki and Kętrzyński poviats and on the other side of the border. Many of these areas suffer flooding and bogging not only of the agricultural fields but also forests and parks.

The Kaliningrad Oblast still has no waste treatment plant. A considerable number of landfills are illegal dumps. Leakage from the dumps pollutes surface waters.

To counteract the effects of possible emergencies and eliminate extraordinary hazards in the Oblast, the relevant land and marine services should be better prepared to cope than they are today.

The reconstruction of melioration systems together with canals, gates and culverts should be one of the new forms of developing cross-border co-operation.

## Conclusions

Kaliningrad - its past is one of the most important issues not only for its neighbours but also the entire European Union. Isolated from the outside world Kaliningrad Oblast puts at risk the Baltic political and military space. To prevent the above necessary measures must be taken to include the Oblast into all possible forms of Baltic and European co-operation. Thanks to the opening of Europe towards Kaliningrad and Kaliningrad to Europe this region has an opportunity to gradually break the isolation, which was the primary reason for its peripheral position. The enlargement of the Schengen Area have considerably complicated relations and weakened crossborder co-operation with Poland.

The development of Kaliningrad's economic future also requires sustainable economic, ecological, social and political development. Gradual equalisation, in terms of economic development, with reference to neighbouring Poland and Lithuania could have a positive impact on "more civilised" border crossings and reduction of the related pathologies. The development of new principles of model co-operation between EU and Russia may significantly stimulate the economy and new forms of spatial development in Polish Russian crossborder regions.

## References

- Bugajski D. R., 2006, *Polska i międzynarodowa żegluga w Cieśninie Pilawskiej*. Polski Przegląd Dyplomatyczny, No. 4 (32).
- Jaroszewicz M., 2007, *Skutki rozszerzenia obszaru Schengen dla wschodnich sąsiadów Unii Europejskiej*. Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich im. Marka Karpa, Warsaw.
- Kowalczyk U., Łuczak B., 2007, *Przekop w pełni realny*. Namiary na Morze i Handel, No. 1.
- Luks K., 2006, *Warunki uprawiania żeglugi na Zalewie Wiślanym*. Przegląd Morski, February.

- Palmowski T., (Ed.), 2007, *Pogranicze polsko-rosyjskie. Problemy współpracy transgranicznej z Obwodem Kaliningradzkim*. Bernadinum, Gdynia-Pelplin.
- Rąkowski G., 2000, *Transgraniczne obszary chronione na wschodnim pograniczu Polski*. Instytut Ochrony Środowiska, Warsaw.
- Sandecki M., 2009, *Kaliningrad coraz bliżej*. „Gazeta Wyborcza”, 28-29.11.
- Terytorialno-kompleksowy schemat planowania urbanistycznego rozwoju Obwodu Kaliningradzkiego i jego części*, 2002, Kaliningrad.
- Żukowski A. (Ed.), 2008, *Polska a Obwód Kaliningradzki Federacji Rosyjskiej*. Wyd. Adam Marszałek, Toruń.